

~~Handwritten scribble~~

52

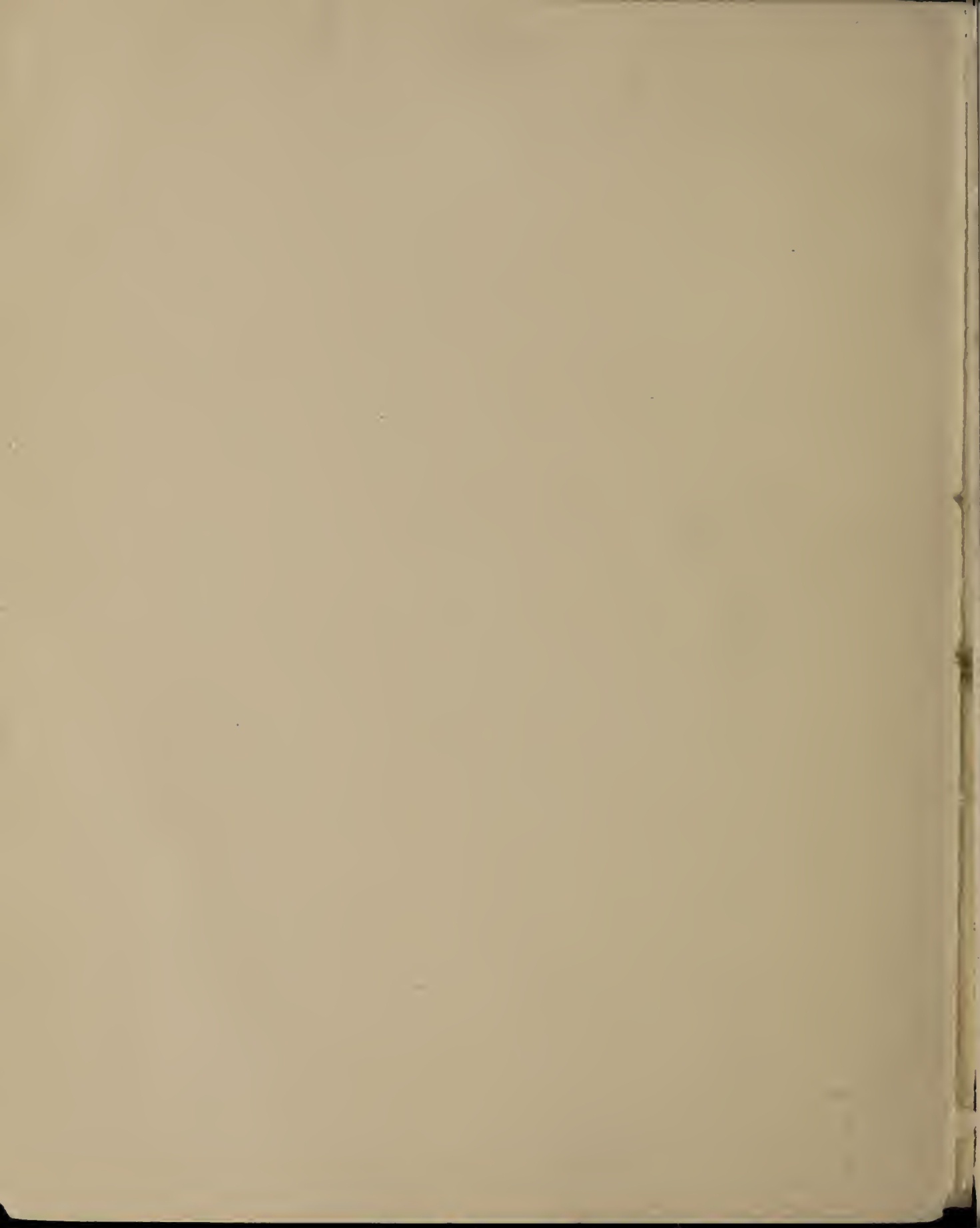
HX.  
L56  
B8  
S25  
1298

O'NEILL LIBRARY  
BOSTON COLLEGE

## PREFACE.

---

BROOK FARM was not the only Socialist experiment at the time of its establishment, though much the most important one in every respect. The highest talent of the country was represented there. It went into operation in 1841. Another was formed at Fruitlands in Harvard, Mass., with A. Bronson Alcott at the head; another at Hopedale in Milford, with Adin Ballou as leader. There was one in New Jersey, also.



BOSTON COLLEGE LIBRARY  
CHESTNUT HILL, MASS.

## Brook Farm.

BY ANNIE M. SALISBURY.

“THE full history of Brook Farm can only be written by one who belonged to it and shared its secret, and it doubtless would have been written before this had the materials been more solid. Aspirations have no history.”

Brook Farm Community, as it has erroneously been called, was not, in the usual sense of the word, a Community—George Ripley, the leading spirit, disclaims the appellation. The association was formed by the most highly intellectual and morally noblest men and women of New England, to enable them to live a life freer from the “trammels of civilization,” as they would express it; or, as we should say, more free from the tyranny of social life with its senseless despotism.

Fifty years ago a Boston Unitarian pastor was looked upon as a beacon light intellectually, as also

18028

the highest type in purity of life and motive: but feeling that there was much sham in the pulpit, George Ripley was said to have made the remark that he "could pray by the job no longer." I do not vouch for the truth of it. German Transcendentalism (if anyone happens to know what that may mean) was rife in Boston at that time, too. I quote from O. B. Frothingham's works: "It must be remembered that projects of radical social reform were in the air at this time. Carlyle was thundering against shams in religion and politics; Dickens was showing up the abuses, cruelties and iniquities of the established order; Kingsley was stirring the caldron of social discontent. \* \* \* Seeds were ripening in France as well as in England, in fact all over Europe, for the great revolt of 1848. The influence of the new ideas was felt in the United States. We have the testimony of James Martineau to the fact that Dr. Channing for a time fell under the fascination of some of the speculative writers \* \* \* who held forth the promise of a golden age for society. Rousseau and others entertained the idea of going to South America to plant an ideal society. Similar plans were eagerly discussed among the friends of progress in Boston."

Mr. and Mrs. Ripley were prominent as talkers and eager as listeners. Mrs. Ripley was a woman of burning enthusiasm, warm feeling, and passionate will. Theodore Parker made the following entry in his journal: "Mrs. Ripley gave me a tactic rebuke for not shrieking at wrongs, and spoke of the danger of losing our humanity in abstractions." Dr. Channing had said in a letter to Rev. Adin Ballou, dated Feb. 27, 1841, two months before the beginning of Brook Farm, "I have for a very long time dreamed of an association in which the members, instead of preying on one another, and seeking to put each other down after the fashion of this world, should live together as brothers, seeking one another's elevation and spiritual growth." That this spirit was carried out at Brook Farm was evident to all who entered into the life there. "Though the institution was far from being religious in spiritual purpose," their strong faith in the "divinity of impulse," as Frothingham has expressed it, could not but be misleading when carried to the extent to which it was there. Even the German Transcendentalist was not perfect, except, perhaps, in his own eyes. Their confidence in individual freedom might have been dangerous, but it was only considered "freedom to become wise and



good, simple and self-sacrificing, gentle and kind."

There was no theological creed, no ecclesiastical form, no inquisition into opinions, no avowed reliance on superhuman aid. The thoughts of all were heartily respected, and while some listened with sympathy to Theodore Parker, others went to church nowhere or sought the privileges of their own communion. By far the greater part of the people went to church nowhere. It was very decidedly not popular there to go to church! It savored too strongly of bondage to *civilization*! "It has been well said that the aim of the association was practical, not theoretical, not transcendental, not intellectual; in the same breath it must be added that it was in a high sense spiritual; that it was practical because it was spiritual; that while it aimed at the physical and mental elevation of the poorer classes, it did so because it believed in their natural capacity for elevation as children of God. \* \* \* More than this, they felt themselves to be Christians. The name of Jesus was always spoken with earnest reverence."

In 1841, the earliest articles of association were subscribed to by George Ripley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Minot Pratt, Charles A. Dana, William B. Allen, Sophia W. Ripley, Maria T. Pratt, Sarah F.



Stearns, Marianne Ripley, Charles O. Whitmore.  
Following are a few of the leading articles :

Articles of Association made and executed this twenty-ninth day of September, one thousand eight hundred and forty-one, by and between the several persons and their assigns, who have given their signature to this instrument, and by it associated themselves together for the purpose and objects hereinafter set forth :

ARTICLE I. The name and style of this Association shall be *The Subscribers to the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education* ; and all persons who shall hold one or more shares of the stock of the Association shall be members, and every member shall be entitled to one vote on all matters relating to the funds of the Association.

ARTICLE II. The object of the Association is to purchase such estates as may be required for the establishment and continuance of an agricultural, literary and scientific school or college ; to provide such lands and houses, animals, libraries and apparatus as may be found expedient or advantageous to the main purpose of the Association.

ARTICLE III. The whole property of the Association, real and personal, shall be vested in and held by four trustees to be elected annually by the Association.

The site of Brook Farm was a pleasant one, not far from Theodore Parker's meeting-house, on Centre street, and in close vicinity to some of the most wealthy, capable and zealous friends of the enterprise. It was charmingly diversified with hill and hollow, meadow and upland. It possessed, moreover, historical associations which were interesting to its new occupants. Here the "apostle" Elliot preached to the Indians,—his grave was hard by. The birth-place was not far distant of General Warren, of Revolutionary fame. The spot seemed particularly appropriate to the use it was now set apart for. Later experiences showed its unfitness for lucrative tillage, but for an institution of education, a semi-æsthetic, humane undertaking nothing could be better. In a letter to Emerson, Mr. Ripley says, "I recollect you said if you were sure of compeers of the right stamp you might embark yourself in the adventure. As to this, let me suggest the inquiry whether our Association should not be composed of various classes of men. If we have friends whom we love

and who love us, I think we should be content to join with others with whom our personal sympathy is not strong, but whose general ideas coincide with ours and whose gifts and abilities would make their services important. For instance, I should like to have a good washerwoman in my parish, admitted into the plot ! She is certainly not a Minerva or a Venus, but we might educate her two children to wisdom and varied accomplishments, who otherwise will be doomed to drudge through life. The same is true of some farmers and mechanics whom we should like with us."

This letter shows the truly philanthropic spirit which characterized the founders of Brook Farm Association,—the wholly unselfish idea they were trying to carry out. In another letter to Emerson, after giving an account of the plans of the Association, he says: "I can imagine no plan which is suited to carry into effect so many divine ideas as this. If wisely executed, it will be a light over this country and this age ; if not the sunrise, it will be the morning star. \* \* \* I shall be anxious to hear from you. Your decision will do much towards settling the question, with me, whether the time has come for the fulfillment of a high hope or whether

the work belongs to a future generation." It is interesting to know the light in which the practical mind of Emerson viewed the experiment. He says in a letter to Mr. Ripley: "It is quite time I made an answer to your proposition that I should venture into your new community. The design appears to me noble and generous, proceeding, as I plainly see, from nothing covert, or selfish, or ambitious, but from a manly and expanding heart and mind, so it makes all men its friends and debtors. \* \* \* I have decided not to join it, and yet very slowly and, I may almost say, with penitence. I am greatly relieved by learning that your coadjutors are now so many that you will no longer attach that importance to the defect of individuals, which you hinted in your letter to me, I or others might possess—the painful power, I mean, of preventing the execution of the plan. My feeling is that the community is not good for me, that it has little to offer me which, with resolution, I cannot procure for myself; that it would not be worth my while to make the difficult exchange of my property in Concord for a share in the new household. \* \* \* It seems to me a circuitous and operose way of relieving myself to put upon your community the emancipation which I ought to take

on myself. I must assume my own vows. I do not think I should gain anything, I who have so little skill to converse with people, by a plan of so many parts and which I comprehend so slowly and bluntly. I do not look upon myself as a valuable member of any community which is not either very large or very small and select. I fear that yours would not find me as profitable and pleasant an associate as I should wish to be, and as so important a project seems imperatively to require in all its constituents." In regard to the pecuniary success of the farm, he says he read Mr. Ripley's letter to Mr. Edmund Hosmer, a very intelligent and upright man in the neighborhood, who admired the spirit of the plan, "but distrusted all I told him of the details as far as they concerned the farm. \* \* \* He thought Mr. Ripley should put no dependence on the results of 'gentlemen farmers' such as some he had named. If his (Mr. Hosmer's farm) had been managed in the way Brook Farm was managed, it would have put himself and family in the poor-house long ago." An article in the *Dial* (Margaret Fuller, Jan. 18, 1842) gives a very clear idea of the aims of the Association; "The attempt is made on a very small scale. A few individuals who, unknown to each



other, under different disciplines of life, reacting from different social evils, but aiming at the same object—of being wholly true to their natures as men and women—have been made acquainted with one another and have determined to become the faculty of the embryo university. In order to live a religious and moral life worthy the name, they feel it necessary to come out in some degree from the world and to form themselves into a community of property so far as to exclude competition and the ordinary rules of trade, while they reserve sufficient private property, or the means of obtaining it, for all purposes of independence and isolation at will. They have bought a farm in order to make agriculture the basis of their life, it being the most direct and simple in relation to nature. A true life, while it aims beyond the highest star, is still redolent of the healthy earth. The perfume of clover lingers about it. The lowing of cattle is the natural bass to the melody of human voices. \* \* \* All labor, whether bodily or intellectual, is to be paid at the same rate of wages on the principle that, as the labor becomes merely bodily, it is a great sacrifice to the individual laborer to give his time to it. \* \* \* Another reason for setting the same pecuniary value

on every kind of labor is to give outward expression to the great truth that all labor is sacred when done for a common interest. Saints and philosophers already know this, but the childish world does not.

\* \* \* Nor will this elevation of bodily labor be liable to lower the tone of manners and refinement. The 'children of light' are not altogether unwise in their generation. They have an invisible but all-powerful guard of principles. Minds incapable of refinement will not be attracted into this Association. It is an ideal community, and only to the ideally minded will it be attractive, but these are to be found in every rank of life, under every shadow of circumstance. Even among the diggers of the ditch are to be found some who, through religious cultivation, can look down in meek superiority upon the outwardly refined and book-learned." Emerson says: "The founders of Brook Farm should have this praise, that they made what all people try to make, an agreeable place to live in." All comers, even the most fastidious, found it the pleasantest of residences. It is certain that freedom from household routine, variety of character and talent, variety of work, variety of means of thought and instruction, art, music, poetry, reading, masquerade, did not permit sluggish-



ness or despondency ; broke up routine. There is an agreement in testimony that it was to most of the associates education ; to many the most important period of their lives, the birth of valued friendships, their first acquaintance with the riches of conversation, their training in behavior. The art of letter writing was immensely cultivated, it is said. Letters were not only flying from house to house, but from room to room. It was a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, and an age of reason in a patty pan. "No doubt there was in many a certain strength drawn from the fury of dissent." Thus Mr. Ripley told Theodore Parker, "There is your accomplished friend ; he would hoe corn all day Sunday, if I would let him, but all Massachusetts could not make him do it on Monday."

Hawthorne was with them a year at the first, and was quite enthusiastic for a time. He was there at the beginning of 1841, and his notebooks contain much that is interesting. But Hawthorne's temperament was not congenial with such an atmosphere, nor was his faith clear or steadfast enough to rest contented on its idea. His, however, were observant eyes, and his notes being soliloquies—confessions made to himself—convey honest impressions :

"BROOK FARM, April 13, 1841. I have not yet taken my first lessons in agriculture, except that I went to see our cows foddered yesterday afternoon. We have eight cows of our own. There is a most vicious animal in the yard, a Transcendental heifer, belonging to Margaret Fuller. She tries to rule every other animal, and a guard has to be placed over her while the other animals pass in and out. (Whether the fact that the creature belonged to Miss Fuller, or that it was a Transcendental animal, caused it to be so undesirable a companion, is not announced.) I intend to convert myself into a milkmaid this evening, but I pray heaven that Mr. Ripley may assign me the kindest cows in the herd, otherwise I shall perform my duties with fear and trembling.

"April 14. I did not milk the cows last night, either because Mr. Kipley was afraid to trust them to my hands or me to their horns, I know not which. \* \* \*

"April 16. I have milked a cow.

"April 22. I read no newspapers and hardly remember who is President, and feel as if I had no more concern with what other people trouble themselves about than if I had lived on another planet.

"May 1. All the morning I have been at work under the blue sky on a hillside. Sometimes I have felt as if I were at work in the sky itself, though the material in which I wrought was ore from our gold mine \* \* \* There is nothing so disagreeable

or unseemly in this sort of toil as you think. It defiles the hands, indeed, but not the soul. \* \* \* I do not believe that I should be so patient here if I were not engaged in a righteous and heaven-blest way of life.

"May 11. We have been employed partly in an Augean labor of cleaning out a woodshed. \* \* \* These jobs are not at all suited to my taste.

"June 1. I think this present life of mine gives me an antipathy to pen and ink even more than my custom-house experience did. In the midst of toil, or after a hard day's work, my soul obstinately refuses to be burned out on paper. It is my opinion that a man's soul may be buried and perish under a dung heap just as well as under a pile of money.

"Aug. 15. Even my custom-house experience was not such a thralldom and weariness as this. Oh, labor is the curse of the world, and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionately brutified.

"SALEM, Sept. 3. Really, I should judge it to be twenty years since I left Brook Farm, and I take this to be one proof that my life there was an unnatural and unsuitable, and, therefore unreal one. The real *me* was never an associate of the community. There has been a spectral appearance there sounding the horn at daybreak and milking the cows and hoeing the potatoes and raising the hay, toiling in the sun and doing me the honor to assume my name. But the spectre was not myself."

“Hawthorne was elected to high offices—to those of trustee of the Brook Farm estate and chairman of committee of finance,—but he told Mr. Ripley that he could not spend another winter there. \* \* \*

His rather sombre view must be accepted as the impression of one peculiar mind. In his ‘Blithedale Romance,’ Hawthorne disclaimed any purpose to describe persons or events at Brook Farm, and expressed a hope that some one might yet do justice to a movement so full of earnest aspirations. Miss Fuller was never a member, though going there frequently, and sometimes remaining for a longer or shorter time, and always in strong sympathy with the movement. She delighted the people with her “conversations,” which she had just established in Boston. One who was there at the time says, “She made plenty of money with her talents, which money she religiously devoted, as she had promised herself, to the education of her brothers.” A lady who has written some very interesting articles on life at Brook Farm says, “Seldom is an aspiration, or even an ambition, fulfilled according to its original form and dimensions, because of the ever varying changes constantly taking place on the surface of character, if not at its depths. Having earned our money we

apply for our loaf, and are surprised, it is not unlikely, at the shape, at the color, or at the large or smaller proportion of it. How few of us understand that in any case we have fully our money's worth. I had prayed for arithmetic and history, and the companionship of my equals, and I had found opportunity for unlimited culture and a company of advanced thinkers, large-hearted, pure-minded, religious and cosmopolitan. \* \* \* Work had its own zest; study adorned all that lay below it; intimate friendships filled all the spaces between. If the loaf were too large, of necessity I could not appropriate the whole. I did indeed seem to be receiving my own with compound interest. \* \* \* Democracy and the highest mutual and spiritual culture were evidently the animating ideas at Brook Farm. Had the world denied you opportunities for culture here, your souls should be attended to at once. Did you desire chirography or Sanscrit, it was all one. Hence in the course of time there were classes in German, French and European history, in Italian, Greek, and mathematics. Two Hibernian sisters were learning to read and write."

Though not many were blessed with the talent of the above writer (Mrs. Georgiana Bruce Kirby, who



has written a very interesting book, "Years of Experience,") the place was an El Dorado to many who had only their own hands to help them to an education.

My brother was an enthusiastic member of the association from 1842 to the end, and an indefatigable worker in season and out of season, feeling amply repaid by the cause for which he was laboring and the people among whom he labored. I remember seeing, in a letter written to him a year or two after he left Brook Farm by one who was a co-laborer with him there, "I hear from you no longer; have you gone over entirely to those miserable civilizees, and forgotten the glorious freedom of Brook Farm?"

I was a pupil there in the summer of 1843. At first all who were members or pupils were expected to work a certain number of hours in the day, but as funds were very much needed, and there seemed no other way to raise them, pupils were taken as at other schools, for pecuniary compensation. George Ripley was teacher for intellectual and moral philosophy and mathematics, and his accomplished wife—who, I think, was said at that time to be the most learned woman in Boston, than which no greater praise could be given in America—was teacher in history and

modern languages ; George P. Bradford took the department of *belles lettres* ; Charles A. Dana had classes in Greek and German ; John S. Dwight in Latin and music, and lesser lights in other branches. Many were glad to avail themselves of opportunities thus afforded on any terms. Probably purer people as to moral status or as many highly intellectual people were never assembled in one company. But, though all worked, it was the *workers* who did the work, there as elsewhere, while the theorizers theorized beautifully and gave a charm to the common life. I would not imply that any one of the members shirked unpleasant labor. The elegant Mrs. Ripley is said to have worked ten hours in the day in the laundry at times, but what I would imply is that a skilled laundress might have done the same work in six hours, perhaps better. "She worked in the laundry until the necessity of economizing strength compelled her to resort to lighter labor in which her natural elegance and refinement of judgment were required." Mr. Ripley never shrank from the most menial work about the barn. "He liked to milk cows, saying such an occupation was eminently favorable to contemplation, particularly when the cow's tail was looped up behind." I recall



the figure of John S. Dwight as I used to see him in his tunic (the regulation garment of the masculine members of the Association), moving among us in the most quiet and unostentatious manner, not at all as if he knew himself the bright musical light of the time, as he was. Some one says: "This winter brought to us a cordial sympathizer and earnest laborer, John S. Dwight, and with him all sorts of talk about the meaning and use of music and much delicate improvisation. Soon there was a class of little ones crowding around the gentle, genial master, singing from the first Boston School Singing Book (has there been so sweet a collection since?) and later a larger class who attacked the glees in "Kingsley's Choir," and presented Mozart's seventh and twelfth masses. How modestly he speaks of the mass clubs which sprang up about that time, not only at Brook Farm but in Boston, and of the writing and lecturing on the great masters, as if he himself had not been the sole instigator and unwearied worker, assisted, no doubt measurably, by the articles of Miss Fuller. First it was necessary to create a larger want for something better than the Swiss Bell Ringers and mangled psalmody; then he set himself to work to cause to be assembled the talent that would

supply while it increased the demand. It will never be known by what studied and persistent manipulation a sufficiently large public was brought to believe that Beethoven's symphonies and Mozart's masses were Divine creations, and as such their performance should be called for by all lovers of fine music." George William Curtis and his 'English Oxford brother,' Burrell, were notable residents at that time. Mr. George Curtis showed then the material that was in him, and gave promise of the power he was to wield in later years, and the stand he was to take for humanity. But the elder brother Burrell had a look as if he were above earth. In one of the magazines of a few years ago I saw an article in which it was stated that an artist in Europe had requested him to sit for a head of Christ. His name was not given, but I felt sure from personal recollection of the circumstances that the person spoken of was the 'Oxford' brother of G. W. Curtis. Charles Dana of the New York *Sun* was one of the active and enthusiastic members. There were several houses: the Hive, where we took our meals, and where all work pertaining to the culinary department was carried on; Pilgrim Hall was another building, sometimes called the Morton House, built by the father of Mrs. Diaz,

who was Abby Morton when at Brook Farm. But the most beautiful for situation was the Eyrie, built on high land and overlooking the Charles river. I was so fortunate as to have a room there, and in the same house were Mr. and Mrs. Ripley, also George W. and Burrell Curtis.

But the idyllic phase of Brook Farm was nearly ended. Thus far there had been no organization. The name was an afterthought. The constitution was not written till the experiment was several months old. The principle of freedom from all restraints but those of reason and conscience made the managers jealous even of apparent control. The policy of non-intervention was carried as far as it could be without incurring the risk of anarchy. This was not unfitly called the "Transcendental period." As early as 1843 the wisdom of making changes in the direction of scientific arrangement was agitated; in the first months of 1844 the reformation was seriously begun. There was an enthusiastic meeting held at Boston in behalf of Fourierism. Brook Farm was represented, and Mr. Ripley made an earnest speech. Albert Brisbane was the most prominent person associated with Fourier in this country. He was a powerful instrument in the conversion of Brook Farm. He came there often, at first for a few days only, but afterwards residing several months. "He was a man of ability and enthusiasm, an intellectual

visionary. In the mere name 'phalanx' he seemed to hear the trumpets of the angels. \* \* \* In April, 1844, a convention of Associationists was held at New York. \* \* \* Burning words fell as if from inspired lips ; Channing, Dana, Greeley, Godwin, each in characteristic style and all with deep sincerity, poured out their souls." In March, 1845, the Brook Farm 'phalanx' was incorporated by the Legislature of Massachusetts. "The change to Fourierism made essential changes, a different class of people, more practical and prosaic came hither. It frightened away idealists whose presence had given to the spot its chief attraction, and injured the pastoral bloom which beautified it." The building of the Phalanstery, that all might be under one roof, which required all their available funds or more, was the next thing in order. This was much disapproved of at the time by people who sympathized in their aims but thought the method impracticable. When nearly finished the building took fire. This was on the night of March 3, 1846. In the unfinished state of the building, and with the water facilities at hand, it was impossible to save it, and with its downfall burst the beautiful bubble for which they had labored so earnestly, and from which they hoped such high fruition.

"The sternness of the waking does not destroy the beauty of the dream. Brook Farm was an idyl, and in the days of epics the idyl is easily forgotten."

BOSTON COLLEGE



3 9031 035 19511 4

18028

**Date Due**

---

PRESS OF W. B. SMITH, MASONIC BUILDING.  
MARLBOROUGH, MASS.  
1898.